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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRUTH IN EXISTENTIALISM AND PRAGMATISM

I

PRAGMATISM, in America, and Existentialism, in Europe, have agreed at least in one respect: that there is a pluralism of truth—historical and relative, though "working," truths—whatever truth may be otherwise. Pragmatism and Existentialism have in common, above all, a strong contempt for intellectualism or pure rationalism. They both feel that "life" is more than theory, and being is prior to thinking. Epistemologically, both are common-sense realisms. There have been some suggestions as to the likeness of Pragmatism and Existentialism, such as the one which describes Existentialism as a "radical Pragmatism" and considers James's classical statement of the necessary difference which a truth must make to someone's individual life as a "striking out in the direction of Existentialism."[1]

These two modern philosophies are no doubt genuinely concerned with what is true for the sake of a successful, rich, and deep life. But that is, of course, not all. They agree at their starting point that *adaequatio intellectus et rei* is an insufficient definition of truth, but they arrive ultimately at different conclusions. They agree that "names" of the "universe's principle," as James says—"God," "Matter," etc.—are meaningless without being related to individual existence, but they have quite a different attitude toward the way in which "reality" and "being," respectively, "reveal" themselves. The task of this paper is to investigate and compare the notion of truth in the two philosophies, with special reference to Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and William James.

II

Pascal, who claimed that the heart has its reasons which reason does not understand, was one of the first thinkers to inaugurate the mode of thought—at least for our age—which places "existential" truth above merely intellectual truth. Vico expressed

[1] Helmut Kuhn, *Encounter with Nothingness* (Hinsdale, Ill., H. Regnery, 1949).

the idea that man can only understand what he has created himself: human history, and not nature. Kierkegaard proposed, in the figure of his "hero of faith," the new ideal of the individual who, although being perhaps in "error" ethically speaking, lives in truth, religiously speaking. Nietzsche analyzed truth in a similar fashion, although he placed *"bios"* over faith and religion.

> The wrongness of a judgment is no objection to a judgment. . . . The question is how far it is helpful for life, preserving life, a preservation of the species, perhaps even regenerating the species.[2]

Following Kant in form but Nietzsche in essence, Vaihinger proposed his "Philosophy of As-If," which was another move to destroy intellectualistic absolute truth. Vaihinger's "fictions" may either contradict reality or be contradictory within themselves as long as they serve the purpose of mastering life.

In Existentialism, the revolt against rationalism was not limited to negations of the "existential" value of the sciences and not confined to suggestions of biological truths; it was carried through with constructive power, dealing with specifically human —and not just biological—truths. Jaspers, more perhaps than Heidegger, emphasized the fact that philosophy is a means of individual orientation in the world; and "illumination of existence" (*Existenzerhellung*) was his aim. In order to stimulate the interest of philosophers and non-philosophers in this kind of "first" philosophical truth, he had to wage a battle against both (neo-Kantian) idealism, which was still occupied with listing "categories" of thinking, and positivistic realism, which had surrendered to science.

Karl Jaspers, going back to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the great destroyers of the great classical philosophical systems, undertook to revive philosophy, and the attempt resulted eventually in the fundamental work *Von der Wahrheit* (On Truth).[3] Throughout all his publications, truth is the center of Jaspers' discussions. To him, it has a fourfold aspect: It means (1) practical usefulness (*Brauchbarkeit*), (2) scientific evidence (*Evidenz*), (3) moral conviction (*Überzeugung*), and (4) existential faith (*Glaube*).[4] The simple, practical usefulness is of the least complex nature. Evidence is scientific truth which can be satisfactorily proven in objective terms. Convictions rule the will. Faith is the necessary basis of all meaningful human existence.

There are a few points pertaining to truth which always have

[2] *Beyond Good and Evil* (translated from the German edition, Leipzig, 1930, p. 3).

[3] München, 1947.

[4] *Vernunft und Existenz* (Bremen, 1949), pp. 62, 72.

to be borne in mind for a full understanding of Jaspers' attitude toward the intellectual relativity of human values: it is significant to see who the speaker of truth is; the historicity of truth must be taken into account, and consequently its plurality; truth is always in the making, "becoming" (*werdend*), without gaining in value. There is no progress toward ultimate, absolute truth. In the realm of the mind there is no progress at all; only in science —existentially insignificant—is there progress. The "becoming" truth is a truth which grows with the integration and maturity of the individual who holds it; and since man as such does not progress, truth does not progress either. The progress of scientific truth is accidental and accumulative—quantitative—and does not help man spiritually.

Jaspers distrusts intellectual truth. Usefulness, evidence, and conviction are minor forms of truth. Only in faith is there *the* truth which may take the form of truths according to the individual. Existentialism is meant to function as a reminder of our modern life, with human values destroyed, and of our civilization, threatened with decline. Spengler's prophecies loom always in the background of Jaspers' work. Science, the product of the rationalistic, sceptical mind, making impossible a life in faith, can not—and does not want to—help us in the task of spiritual orientation. Scientific truth, for Jaspers, is insignificant. Existential truth, which is not static knowledge of an object and agreement with it, but directed toward a change of the individual's attitude toward his position, his mission, and fate in the world, is—in the last analysis—*an appeal.*

With his concept of Transcendence, as the polar opposite of Existence, Jaspers adds to the intellectual truth of the rationalist and the fictitious, immanent truth of the "life philosophers"—the vitalists—a kind of truth which lies in faith and which receives verification through faith. What Transcendence is we do not know; that it is we experience in Existence. "Transzendenz," says Jaspers, "zeigt sich allein der Existenz."[5] And he continues in his definition of the two basic ideas in his philosophy:

Wo ich eigentlich ich selbst bin, bin ich es nicht durch mich selbst. Ich habe mich nicht selbst geschaffen. Wo ich eigentlich ich selbst bin, weiss ich, dass ich mir geschenkt werde. Je entschiedener meine Freiheit mir bewusst ist, desto entschiedener zugleich auch die Transzendenz, durch die ich bin. Ich bin Existenz nur in eins mit dem Wissen um Transzendenz als um die Macht, durch die ich ich selbst bin.[6]

[5] *Von der Wahrheit,* p. 110. "Transcendence manifests itself only in Existence."

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 110. "When I am really myself, it is not through myself. I have not created myself. When I am really myself I know that I am being

There is, then, the individual in Jaspers' philosophy who tries, or ought to try, to be "himself" and to lead an integrated life. He can do so because man is free. But freedom is given to man; he is fated to be free. He is free through Transcendence. True Existence is only possible through Transcendence. Jaspers believes in a Transcendence which is obvious in Existence.

Like Kierkegaard, Jaspers begins to doubt the value of doubt again and tries to believe in belief—a tendency not unknown to the philosophy of William James, either.

III

Whereas Jaspers rests the attainment of truth on dynamic faith, Martin Heidegger in his search for truth finds its human basis in the phenomenon of dynamic freedom. Like Jaspers' faith, Heidegger's freedom does not communicate truth as such. It simply serves as the springboard for the eventual identification of truth. It is *toward* truth. Nothing intellectual or rational is contained in it. There is no content of truth, but just a dynamic relation between faith-freedom and truth. There is no definite goal (of truth), there is hardly even a way. All there is, is a desire—and, underneath it, fear.[7]

Heidegger attempts to give the origin of truth rather than its intellectual or material manifestation.[8] He denies that the intellectual notion of truth as agreement (*veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*) from whatever angle it may be approached—theological, cosmological, subjective, or critical—is the only veritable truth.[9] Yet, since Heidegger is a disciple of Husserl, there is a "return to the things," a return to the objects, in his work which can best be explained by an analysis of his concept of "openness."

Man, says Heidegger, in the act of "*Vorstellen*" (which means both to conceive and to imagine and, in addition, to "place before" oneself) has the objects of his conception "standing in front" of him. The possibility of this relation between man and the world lies in the phenomenon which Heidegger calls "*das Offene*" (that

given to me. The more I am conscious of my freedom the more I am conscious of Transcendence, through which I am. I am Existence only when I know of Transcendence, which is the power through which I am myself."

[7] Cf. Heidegger's analysis of fear in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), and William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Modern Library, pp. 157–158.

[8] We quote from *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, Frankfurt am M. (1949); *Sein und Zeit* deals less extensively with truth than that booklet.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

which is open). Man finds himself *in* the world, he is *in* the world, he is open to and for the world so that even his thoughts are world. However, the relation between man and the world in which he is, is not just there in *"das Offene"* but has to be accomplished in the act of relating (*"Vollzug"*). Man is a dynamic being. Thus, the possibility of man-world relation becomes reality. Finally, the "things" in the world would not be reached by the mind if they did not yield their character and disclose their status: this is, then, the basic ontological fact of *"das Offenbare"* by which is meant the disclosure of being, *"das Seiende."*

Heidegger has strictly avoided the traditional terms of "subject" and "object" ("intellect" and "reality") in order to show that there is no split between "mind" and the world. In his philosophy, both subjective idealism and objective realism have been replaced by an ontology (which Heidegger calls "fundamental") [10] stressing the fact that the world, being, is first, and that man, as being, is part of the world. Human being is *"Dasein,"* being-there, which is in the world, of the world, toward the world, and remains world for ever.

The phenomenon of the disclosure of being—without being disclosing itself, thinking about it would be impossible—brings us to a detailed comparison between Jaspers and Heidegger. Their agreement in terminology and meaning, related to the idea of being disclosing itself and truth, would be even more striking if their common background and training in Greek philosophy were not so well known. Very often their phrasing is as good as identical, and this is another indication that the distinction made between Jaspers the religious existentialist and Heidegger the atheistic existentialist is secondary. Jaspers is no Christian thinker and Heidegger is no materialist; in their agreement that being discloses itself to man and that man is open to that disclosure, they strike a common chord, and it is not too much to say that both philosophies with their somewhat mystic concept of Existence—which means something quite different from just "to exist" and points at the core of the possibility of human life—are continuing the German and European anti-rationalist tradition which in previous centuries has climaxed in such thinkers as Meister Eckhardt, Jakob Boehme, Pascal, and Kierkegaard.[11]

[10] *"Fundamentalontologie."*

[11] Cf. the attempt to overcome the subject-object split in mystic philosophy. In the case of Heidegger, his preference for the poets Hölderlin and Rilke, whose works he has interpreted in the light of his own philosophy, is particularly interesting.

IV

The following is a confrontation of aspects of truth in Jaspers' and Heidegger's terms, with translations at the end.

A. Openness of Being

a. Jaspers

Die Wahrheit selbst ist die Offenbarkeit des [Seins].[12]

aa. Heidegger

[Das Wesen der Wahrheit] . . . ist die Offenbarkeit des Seienden im Ganzen. . . .[13]

B. Disclosure of Being, its Non-Concealedness

b. Jaspers

Wahrheit ist das Sein selbst in seinem Offenbargewordensein (das griechische Wort für Wahrheit, ἀλήθεια, heisst wörtlich Unverborgenheit).

bb. Heidegger

1. [Die Wahrheit] . . . ist die Entborgenheit des Seienden als eines solchen.
2. . . . ἀλήθεια statt mit "Wahrheit" durch "Unverborgenheit" übersetzen. . . .

C. Being as Motion and Condition for Truth

c. Jaspers

Die Wahrheit selbst ist die Offenbarkeit des uns entgegenkommenden Anderen.

cc. Heidegger

1. Dass das Sein selber und wie das Sein selbst hier ein Denken angeht, steht nie zuerst und nie allein beim Denken.[14]
2. [Zum Wahrheit-Sagen] . . . kommt es nur, wenn das Seiende selbst vorstellig wird beim vorstellenden Aussagen, so dass dieses sich einer Weisung unterstellt, das Seiende, so wie es ist, zu sagen.

D. Things-Being and Being as Such

d. Jaspers

Das Offenbarwerden der Erscheinungen ist nicht schon das Offenbarwerden des Grundes.

dd. Heidegger

Die Metaphysik denkt, insofern sie stets nur das Seiende als das Seiende vorstellt, nicht an das Sein selbst.

E. The Break-Through to the Totality (of Being)

e. Jaspers

Aber jede von ihm [dem Menschen] ergriffene Einheit muss er wieder durchbrechen—bis er im Einen die Ruhe hätte, dort wo jeder Durchbruch aufhört, weil das Sein in Einem, alles in allem, unendlich gegenwärtig wäre.

[12] *Von der Wahrheit*, p. 458. Quotations *b*, *c*, and *d* are also from p. 458, *e* is from p. 710.

[13] *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, p. 18. *bb* is from p. 15, *cc* 2 from p. 11.

[14] *Was ist Metaphysik?* (Frankfurt am M., 1949), p. 9. *dd* is from p. 8, *ee* from pp. 23–24.

ee. Heidegger

[In der Wissenschaft] geschieht nichts geringeres als der Einbruch eines Seienden, genannt Mensch, in das Ganze des Seienden, so zwar, dass in und durch diesen Einbruch das Seiende in dem, was und wie es ist, aufbricht.[15]

Let us summarize what Jaspers means by truth. Truth is first based on the fact of the openness of being, its non-concealedness and

[15] Translation:

a. Truth itself is the openness of [being].

aa. [The essence of truth] . . . is the openness of things-being as a whole. . . .

b. Truth is being itself in its state of disclosure (the Greek word for truth, ἀλήθεια, means literally non-concealedness).

bb. 1. [Truth] . . . is the disclosure of things-being as such.
2.. . . . to translate ἀλήθεια by non-concealedness instead of by truth. . . .

c. Truth itself is the openness of something coming toward us.

cc. 1. That being itself approaches thinking and how it here approaches thinking is never primarily and never solely a condition of thinking.
2. [Truth is said] . . . only when things-being itself presents itself to the conceiving mind so that the mind is under an order to say things-being as it is.
(It should be noted here that *Aussagen* is not literally "mind" but means quite generally "saying," "stating," or "statement," and that Heidegger's choice of words reflects upon his refusal to use terms of idealistic origin.)

d. The process of the disclosing of appearances is not yet the process of the disclosing of the ground [of appearances].

dd. Metaphysics, as far as it is concerned only with things-being as things-being, does not deal with being as such.

e. But every unit conceived by him [man] he is forced to break through again—until he has peace in the One, where every break-through ends since being would be infinitely present all in all in the One.

ee. [In science] nothing less happens than the break-through of a being, called man, into the whole of things-being, in such a fashion that in and through this break-through, being *breaks-up* in that which it is and how it is.
(Science, it should be remembered here, is understood by Heidegger as the principles of knowledge rather than any particular science. As far as the italicized form of the verb "to break," or "to break up," is concerned, it should be taken in the meaning which Webster's Dictionary mentions as No. 2 of the intransitive verb: "To emerge or depart by breaking bonds or restraints." Heidegger's conclusion of the paragraph quoted above under *ee* is: "Der aufbrechende Einbruch verhilft in seiner Weise dem Seienden allererst zu ihm selbst." That means that Heidegger considers the element of *aufbrechen* (which means both to depart and to break up) as a way of the individual to integrate his personality, to become himself rather than stay the anonymous, unintegrated "one" of mass society. Unfortunate in the *ee*-quotation is that the words "in dem, was und wie es ist" are quite obscure, as are many other Heidegger phrases.)

disclosure; being in such a form approaches man who conceives of its wholeness and oneness with the help of a break-through, by which Jaspers can only mean Existence reaching for Transcendence. "Appearances," not to be mistaken for Kant's "appearances" as opposed to "things-in-themselves," are the things in their objective plurality; their ground, their origin, their unity is conceived of by man as possible Transcendence, and not, as in the case of Kant, as something unknown. In Heidegger's philosophy, truth is likewise based on the fact of the openness of being, its non-concealedness and disclosure; being in such a form approaches man who conceives of its wholeness with the help of "ek-sistence"—that which is "out-standing" or which "stands out." Being is "out" in the direction of "ek-sistence," which, in turn, is "out" in the direction of being. They "encounter," to use a word which William James applied to Schiller's Pragmatism. James continued:

> Superficially this sounds like Kant's view; but between categories fulminated before nature began, and categories gradually forming themselves in nature's presence, the whole chasm between rationalism and empiricism yawns.[16]

But again there is almost as much difference between the belief of Heidegger-Jaspers that existence is "out" for being (and vice versa) and James's empiricism, as between this empiricism and Kant's rationalism. In regard to the *meaning* of truth for the individual human being there is much agreement between James and Heidegger-Jaspers; in regard to the *origin* of the possibility of truth there is little, if any, agreement.

That which remains different between Jaspers and Heidegger is the nature of being. In Jaspers, being in its ultimate form is unity, wholeness, totality, Transcendence. In Heidegger, things-being (*Seiendes*) and things being as a whole (*Seiendes als Ganzes*) are different from being as such (*Sein*). In his booklet *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,* Heidegger deals with things-being and things being as a whole; the same holds true for the text of *Was ist Metaphysik?* (quotation *ee*). Being as a whole seems to come close to Jaspers' Transcendence. But in the introduction written especially for the new edition of *Was ist Metaphysik?* [17] being as such is considered more fundamental than things-being (quotations *cc* 1 and *dd*). For Heidegger, there is something beyond the totality of things-being; that is being. Metaphysics, he holds, deals with the totality—the traditional substance, be it Spirit, Matter,

[16] *Pragmatism* (New York, 1948), p. 249.

[17] The new edition was published in 1949; originally the lecture on which the text is based was given in 1929, published in the same year and republished in 1943 with a new epilogue.

or Energy—of things-being. That is what Jaspers does in a certain way, as we have seen, although his Transcendence is only a *formal* concept of the totality of things-being, not a material one. But Heidegger wants to transcend metaphysics—and Transcendence—and write a metaphysics of metaphysics, so to say. He asks: What *is* metaphysics? What is its ground? its object? Metaphysics traditionally deals with things-being and its necessary "dialectical" opposite, *"das Nichts"* (Nothing, Nothingness). But beyond is the "light," the "openness of being," and Heidegger states:

Die Wahrheit des Seins kann deshalb der Grund heissen, in dem die Metaphysik als die Wurzel des Baumes der Philosophie gehalten, aus dem sie genährt wird.[18]

Descartes said, in a letter to Picot, the translator of his *Principia Philosophiae,* that "la philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la Métaphysique," etc. For Heidegger, there must be a "soil," a ground in which these roots are imbedded which he finds in being as such.

Although Heidegger goes a layer "deeper" in his exploration of the ground of existence than Jaspers does, Heidegger's Being and Jaspers' Transcendence must be accepted as their great Beyond of all Existence which, in turn, is the great mystic Here. Existence is the basic phenomenon immediately given to us, Transcendence and Being are not immediately given to us. In fact, Transcendence and Being seem to be beyond the reach of man. Man, as man, constantly fails in the face of Transcendence and Being. Jaspers always speaks of man's failure, a fact of human existence as conditioned by Transcendence. Kierkegaard said that in the face of God, man is always wrong. Jaspers follows with the admission that failure (*Scheitern*) is our destiny. And Heidegger, who started out to write his *Fundamentalontologie* of being, which was to be more than a mere ontology of things-being (the "fundamental ontology" transcending the ordinary ontology and metaphysics), never even gave a definition of being; he admitted this to be impossible, he admitted his failure in this respect not as a human condition but as a "fundamental" condition, we might say, of being which, although it discloses

[18] "Therefore, the truth of being may be called the ground in which metaphysics is held and nourished as the root of the tree of philosophy" (*Was ist Metaphysik?,* p. 8).—It should be noted here that in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger deals exclusively with *Sein* and *Seiendes,* calling *Sein:* "das transcendens schlechthin." He continues: "Phänomenologische Wahrheit (Erschlossenheit von Sein): ist veritas transcendentalis" (Tübingen, 1949, p. 38). That means: "Phenomenological truth (disclosure of being): is veritas transcendentalis."

itself to us in things-being, hides itself in itself as being. With a mood of resignation, he calls "Nothingness"—the other side of things-being—the "veil of being."[19]

These "existential" philosophers are not satisfied with professional, academic thinking; they show an inclination to "live" philosophy even though it may destroy them in their philosophizing, because attempting to reach for the Ultimate, whatever it may be called, is followed by necessary failure. But they are the "tough-minded" thinkers, as James liked to say, they set out to find truth while being aware of their eventual breakdown. Is there a way? They do not know. Is there a goal? William James, in his quotation from Fitz James Stephens, has given an answer.

> In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark. . . . If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. . . . We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? "Be strong and of good courage." Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. . . . If death ends all, we cannot meet death better.[20]

V

Truth, in Heidegger, is the openness of being in relation to the open and opening individual, as we have seen. There should be added here the analysis which Heidegger undertakes of the phenomenon of *Offenständigkeit* (the standing open) of the individual existence as the subjective condition, as contrasted with the disclosure of being as the objective condition for truth. To be open, Openness, is the center of Heidegger's philosophy of the relation of man to the world.

But the "standing open" of the individual to reach the openness of being is not the last element of Heidegger's analysis of the individual's conditions for truth. As being is the ground of things-being, so individual *freedom* is the ground of human existence. He says:

> Die Offenständigkeit des Verhaltens als innere Ermöglichung der Richtigkeit gründet in der Freiheit. Das Wesen der Wahrheit ist die Freiheit.[21]

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[20] *The Will to Believe* (New York, 1897), pp. 30–31.

[21] "The standing-open of the [individual] attitude as inner condition for correctness [of the individual statement on being] is based on freedom. The essence of truth is freedom." *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, p. 12.

Truth is made possible by freedom. Freedom is not a state of static being; it is more than choice, more than liberty to do or not to do certain things. Above all, freedom is "die Eingelassenheit in die Entbergung des Seienden als eines solchen."[22] Engagement, commitment, is the character of freedom rather than something psychological.[23] It is the basic ontological fact of individual human existence. It is the "ek-sistential" commitment of man, its ground and possibility. Human openness, human eksistence is grounded in freedom.

Die in der Wahrheit als Freiheit gewurzelte Ek-sistenz ist die Aussetzung in die Entborgenheit des Seienden als eines solchen.[24]

Both the individual and being are driven toward each other. Both are in "ek-stasy," both are ecstatic. It is a state of being outside of oneself. Thus, with this concept of ek-sistence Heidegger puts the finishing touch on his philosophy. On the one hand, existence is a state of *in*tegrated individual being where the individual is a unique personality and not a product of mass society; this is what one might call the ethical side of Existentialism. On the other hand, existence is a state of *ek*-static individual being where the individual reaches out for being as such and not just any particular being in nature; this is what one might call the metaphysical side of Existentialism.

Existentialism in its phenomenological "return to the things" has suggested the idea of truth as a possibility of merging being in its totality. Far from approving of the intellectualist's creed that truth is agreement between idea and reality, mind and matter, both Jaspers and Heidegger have tried to point out that there is no rational agreement between man and the world, an agreement which may be discarded by philosophically, biologically, or scientifically "fictitious" truths, or which might as well be not searched for at all if man so pleases. Rather, man can not help having truth because he is in that world which is constantly open to him and to which he is open in turn. Man can err; fundamentally, however, he is in the position to have truth. Man may close himself up against the world; fundamentally, however, he is open for it. Man may be not himself; fundamentally, he is called upon to be, and capable of being, himself. Eventually, he is forced to

[22] "The engagement [commitment] to the disclosure of being as such." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[23] Cf. Husserl's philosophy of the basic intentionality of man in regard to being; also Sartre's philosophy of engagement and commitment.

[24] "Ek-sistence rooted in truth as freedom is the ejection [of the individual] into the disclosure of being as such." *Von der Wahrheit*, p. 15.

acknowledge truth, and only his passivity and indoctrination may keep him from grasping it fully.

Heidegger's idea of ek-sistential freedom finds a somewhat less pronounced expression in Jaspers, but it is there nevertheless. Jaspers speaks of freedom as the force "durch die wir offen werden für das eigentliche Sein,"[25] and to him freedom is just as little a psychological or rational factor as for Heidegger. It touches upon man's innermost possibility of existence, and as such it is linked with Transcendence; for "die Freiheit der Existenz ist nur als Identität mit dem Ursprung, an dem das Denken strandet."[26] Freedom is found in Existence, and Existence is the counterpart of Transcendence. Freedom is a promise that man is not altogether lost in a world void of "transcendental" meaning but anything but a guarantee that man can be saved from error and failure.

VI

In James, freedom is reduced to the idea of "free will" and as such presents the "presence of promise" in the world. But the promise in James is a promise limited to individual welfare and has nothing to do with that "ontological promise" of our freedom grounded in being from which truth may result. As is well known, James holds that truth is something about ideas and "internal reality" of ideas generally, and nothing about ultimate "reality," ultimate "matter," and the like. The basic difference in this respect between James on the one hand and Heidegger-Jaspers on the other is that the Pragmatist confines himself to the formal definition of truth in relation to the struggling individual (its "workableness"), and the Existentialists confine themselves to the formal definition of truth in relation to the general "openness" of the world. They all say nothing about "things as such"; they all are content with relations. Heidegger and Jaspers "returning to the things," with Husserl, are not completely "unpragmatic" or expounders of an old-fashioned rationalistic metaphysics. On the contrary, they are "progressive" thinkers, and when it comes to a comparison of the *meaning* of truth the American and the Europeans agree essentially.

Just like Heidegger and Jaspers, James denies any "existential" values to objective and matter-of-fact science. For him nothing is accomplished in and with science as far as the individ-

[25] "Through which we become open for actual being." *Von der Wahrheit*, p. 104.

[26] "Freedom is only as identity with the origin [of being, i.e., of Transcendence] on which thinking gets stranded." *Ibid.*, p. 164.

ual's life is concerned: "trivial options," he said, "abound in the scientific life," whereas "genuine" options, i.e., "forced, living, and momentous" ones, are those which should reign in man's existence.[27] Here James, in expectation of more "genuine" philosophies to come and vigorously opposed to "avoidable, dead, and trivial" systems, pushed right into the heart of later existentialist philosophies. The reaction against arrogant scientism, against the deceptive illusion of the millennium and of progress towards final perfection, against dead systems of truth had set in with full force. James turned, as did Jaspers and Heidegger, against the "dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth." [28]

> *Existential* truth is incidental to the actual competition of opinions. *Essential* truth, the truth of the intellectualist, the truth with no one thinking it, is like the coat that fits though no one has ever tried it on, like the music that no ear has listened to. . . . Pragmatist truth contrives the whole of intellectualist truth and a hundred other things in addition.[29]

The question remains whether James would have followed the "existential truth" of the existentialists in relation to the "openness" of the world, or whether he would not have considered that an essential truth which could be thought by anybody and nobody. His references to the significance of the individual in philosophy,[30] of "existence in the concrete," [31] of the idea of meaning,[32] of the consequence of truth,[33] of "orientation,"[34] the plurality of truth,[35] indicate that he agrees with the "existential" aspects of Existentialism and hardly with the ontological aspects.

Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's appeal to the individual faith or will respectively was reissued by both James and the Existentialists, and accordingly they placed their "working" truth above the intellectualistic truth of subject-object agreement. But whereas the Pragmatist confined himself to the reformulation of the appeal, the two Existentialists adopted the appeal *and* added a new kind of truth which indicated their return to pre-Kantian, pre-idealistic, and pre-empiristic forms of philosophy—a philosophy which is as old as mankind itself.

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[27] *The Will to Believe*, pp. 4, 5.
[28] *Pragmatism*, p. 51.
[29] *The Meaning of Truth* (London, 1909), pp. 189–189.
[30] *Pragmatism*, pp. 20, 50.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

COMMENTS AND CRITICISM

ROMERO ON CARTESIAN REASON [1]

The purpose of this paper is as follows: (1) to note two of Romero's criticisms of Cartesian reason; (2) to point out some of the "very solid and true virtues" which Romero ascribes to genuine reason; and (3) to explore Descartes' views on reason in order to determine whether Cartesian reason does not also exhibit these virtues. If this is the case, Romero is a defender of Cartesian reason and has made, in the passages we are to consider, an important contribution to a more adequate appreciation of reason.

In his *Sobre la Historia de la Filosofía,* Romero cites Kant's view that the Enlightenment was the time when man came of age and decided to use his reason freely.[2] However, this eighteenth-century rationalism was the rationalism of the seventeenth century generalized and vulgarized.[3] This reason had other undesirable characteristics: it judged rather than understood and it held too closely to the dominant concepts which were inadequate because they were developed by those who did not understand history.[4] Hence reason came to seem narrow and superficial. The consequence is, according to Romero, that we now view reason in this light and pass over its "very solid and true virtues."

But what are these "very solid and true virtues"? This is a very important question in an age which has been characterized as an age of retreat from reason. Before we can answer this question, we must first note Romero's emphasis on the difficulty of answering the primary question concerning the nature of reason. Romero likens the difficulty of answering this question to the difficulty mentioned by St. Augustine when he was asked to state the nature of time. It was easy enough for St. Augustine to know the nature of time if he was not asked for an explanation of time; but, when asked, he realized his ignorance. Romero thinks that the same might be said with regard to reason. It seems to him that the attitude of the seventeenth century toward reason sup-

[1] This paper, except for minor changes, was read at the 1951 meeting of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology.

[2] Cf. p. 60.

[3] Cf. *Filosofía de la Persona,* pp. 108–109.

[4] Cf. p. 60 cited above. Romero speaks of the eighteenth century as viewing the past as a mixture of stupidity and wickedness (*Filosofía de la Persona,* p. 108). He finds Voltaire's summary of ancient philosophy squalid. He thinks that, during the eighteenth century, philosophy was too often regarded merely as criticism.

ports this view that it is difficult to state the nature of reason. The seventeenth century, Romero says, accepted reason as a faith and did not investigate it. The knowledge that we have of the nature of reason—and this is little enough—is knowledge gained from the adversaries of reason. Consequently, a true estimate of rationalism has still to be made.[5]

Though this true appraisal of rationalism has not been made as yet, Romero believes that one can cite two important defects in Cartesian reason. From these criticisms we can gain insight into what Romero means by these "very solid and true virtues" of reason. One defect of Cartesian reason is that it is immanent rather than transcendent.[6] First we shall attempt to make clear what Romero means by this criticism and in so doing we shall see why we he objects to reason that is immanent. Secondly we shall notice the basis of this claim of immanence. As for the objection to reason that is immanent, the point is this. In the case of such reason the individual is the "fountain, origin, or depository of knowledge." That is, the attention is directed inward, whereas, in transcendence, the attention is directed outward—the knower sinks himself in the object and lets the object reveal itself to him. In so doing, the knower achieves an insight that is objective and universal rather than subjective.[7]

Why does Romero regard Cartesian reason as immanent? One basis for this opinion is to be found apparently in the sixth of the *Meditations*. The reason for so assuming is that Romero believes that Descartes expounded his view of reason chiefly in his examination of corporeal reality.[8] Let us recall the special passages which Romero seems to have in mind. Descartes asserted that formerly he based his thinking on sense perception. Then he discovered his errors in judgment. As a consequence it seemed reasonable to conclude that corporeal things are not just what the senses show them to be. Indeed comprehension by the senses is often "obscure and confused." Those things, however, which are conceived "clearly and distinctly"—those things which are the

[5] Cf. *Filosofía de Ayer y de Hoy*, pp. 31 and 35.

[6] This, of course, is a position similar to that of Hegel.

[7] Cf. *Papeles para una Filosofía*, p. 21. Romero writes of the Reformation as immanentization of faith; he refers to the natural rights doctrine as the immanentization of sovereignty. Elsewhere he refers more approvingly to Descartes' signal contribution in his "revindication of the individual," since he postulated the individual as the "seat of knowledge." In so doing Descartes seems to Romero to have given voice to the demands of his time and to have uttered views held in common with others rather than merely private views. (Cf. *Sobre la Historia de la Filosofía*, p. 45.)

[8] Cf. *Filosofía Contemporanéa*, p. 109 footnote.

object of pure mathematics—are really known. In this activity of knowing, the mind "in some manner turns on itself," the mind examines the ideas which it finds in its storehouse. Through this introspective procedure the mind can gain a comprehension of external objects more adequately than it was able to do through sense perception.[9] This turning of the attention inward is the procedure to which Romero objects. He regards this procedure as immanentization rather than transcendence. Yet transcendence is necessary if one is to gain insight into corporeal reality, from Romero's standpoint.

Another basis for Romero's contention that Cartesian reason is immanent is to be found in the Cartesian view of substance—a view which Romero regards as formed because of the principle of identity. What is meant here needs further elucidation. Romero claims that immanentism and rationalism coincide. He says that the first principle of Cartesian reason is identity. This principle, as Romero sees it, expresses mere identity rather than a necessary condition of change—i.e., that throughout change something persists, else there would not be change but chaos. Romero believes that the principle of mere identity is based on ontological identity. He maintains that the notion of classical substance was developed partly because of the requirement of identity. This principle, that A is A and nothing but A, affirms immanence, for transcendence would take A beyond itself to something other than itself. Romero regards himself as at one with Hegel on this point, since Hegel's logic was a logic of becoming and hence a logic of transcendence rather than a logic which accepts the principle of identity.[10]

In short, Romero's view of Cartesian reason is that it introspects in order to reach the true. Furthermore, in this process reason arrives at a concept of matter such that matter is viewed as bare identity, as that which has not within itself the possibility of becoming.

Turning now to the second criticism of Cartesian reason, we find Romero objecting to clarity as a demand of reason. Before dealing with this demand of Descartes, Romero notes that the first philosophers chose transparent bodies—water and air—as worthy of being regarded as substance. Then Parmenides gave a state-

[9] Cf. Descartes, *Selections*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927, p. 147.

[10] Cf. *Papeles para una Filosofía*, pp. 22–23. The reference to classical substance is clarified elsewhere by the statement that the judgment "Every body is extended" is an analytical judgment and hence falls under the principle of identity (*Lógica*, p. 30). In connection with the reference to Hegel's view of identity we must also recall Hegel's discussion of true identity.

ment of *being* which is reducible to a list of negations—a list which anticipates Descartes' famous discussion of a piece of wax. Thus reason has been prone to construe being mathematically. Reason does this in order to subtract the opaque and thus to feel that it attains full knowledge.[11] However, reason errs, for all is not *sonnenklar* and the assumption that one can arrive at such clarity is false.

These errors in Descartes' conception of reason—immanentization and insistence on clarity—were overcome, according to Romero, by Leibniz, whom Romero rates as perhaps the greatest modern philosopher. Leibniz corrected these errors by his calculus and by his theory of continuity. The calculus is usable as an instrument of reason and can achieve results even where the process of so doing is not fully understood. Furthermore, Leibniz made clear that reason can apprehend the living and need not reduce all to mathematical forms in order to understand the data with which it is dealing. Hegel too pointed the way to a more adequate rationalism. Hegel substituted the principle of contradiction for that of identity and thus made reason more dynamic.[12]

These approving remarks on the dynamic character of reason, on its ability to grasp more than the mathematical aspects of substance, on its acceptance of its inability to see *all* clearly are apparently indications of reason's "solid and true virtues." Reason's acceptance of its limited ability to achieve clear comprehension is also emphasized in a statement to the effect that reason can not maintain its dignity if it lays any claim to omniscience. Rather, reason's worth is exhibited in its capacity to observe the golden mean and to determine what it can and what it can not know. Reason has the power of self-criticism and self-correction.[13]

Having noted some of the good things which Romero has to say for reason, after we had examined two main criticisms of Cartesian reason, we should now ask ourselves whether that reason does not also possess certain of these virtues. The second criticism can be answered more briefly. It was a criticism of Descartes' insistence on clarity because Romero thinks that reason should be aware of its lack of omniscience, that reason should realize that it will come across opaque areas. Certainly there are faults in Descartes' view that the truth of a theory or of an idea is to be determined by the clear and distinct ideas which one has of it unless these clear and distinct concepts involve also the recognition that one can not know all; that one needs the advice of an expert in a given field. In

[11] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104 and footnote, pp. 104–105.
[12] Cf. *Papeles para una Filosofía*, p. 107.
[13] Cf. *Filosofía de la Persona*, p. 81.

other words, one needs a clear and distinct concept of how best to employ the self-evident test of truth. But Descartes himself concluded that certain things can not be known. In his discussion of Rule VIII of his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind,* Descartes expressed the view that some problems exceed the capacity of human intelligence to solve. In the "Preface to the Reader" included with his *Meditations,* Descartes wrote that the Deity can not be comprehended by the mind. Later, in *Meditation* IV, he attributed error to the wrong use of the freedom of the will. The point here is that the will acts at times without being enlightened by the understanding because will acts in an area where the understanding is without knowledge. Further, he acknowledged that he did not always understand the ways of God to man and he saw no reason why he should have such comprehension. He realized that "an infinity of things" eluded the grasp of his mind. Without mentioning other passages from the writings of Descartes to show that he was aware that there are some opaque areas, we might add this note. The complaint of *philosophes* of the eighteenth century was that Descartes did not regard the fields of ethics, politics, and religion as suitable for scientific inquiry. Thus Descartes too held the view that reason has its limits. Hence Cartesian reason has one of the "very solid and true virtues."

Now in the passages to which reference has just been made the word reason does not occur. Intelligence, mind, and understanding are the translations successively used by Veitch in these passages. Romero makes a distinction between intelligence and reason. He thinks of intelligence as much wider than reason. Intelligent conduct is conduct that obeys the one valid imperative which insists that one submit to the object. One thus is reasonable in his conduct, but this reasonableness goes beyond rationality.[14] Intelligence can judge in matters which are not accessible to reason. But Descartes did not make such a distinction. In his reply to the third set of objections he states that he means by *mind, spirit, intellect, reason* that which "is endowed with the faculty of thinking." In the first part of the *Principles of Human Knowledge,* principle 62, thought and reason are used synonymously, and in principle 63 thought is defined as constituting the nature of the mind. Again, in his reply to the third set of objections, he lists the thinking activities as "understanding, willing, imagining, feeling, etc." Consequently it seems safe to assume that we are not doing injustice to the thought of Descartes when we claim—as we did in the last paragraph—that Descartes

[14] Cf. *Papeles para una Filosofía,* p. 24.

implied that reason has its limits. Furthermore, in the discussion of Rule I of the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind,* he explicitly states that it is necessary to try to think out a way of increasing the "natural light of reason."

To discuss Cartesian reason adequately on the basis of all the passages in which the term occurs would call for a very long paper devoted to that topic alone. But something can be said with regard to Romero's first criticism of Cartesian reason without throwing a false light on that view. This first criticism is that Descartes' reason is immanent and not transcendent. One basis for this view, we noted, is Descartes' supposition that reason turns inward to examine its ideas of corporeal substance and concludes that the corporeal is best known through its mathematical qualities. We can only indicate what comments are pertinent here. First, Descartes said that he mentioned numbers and figures because no science other than mathematics could furnish him with such self-evidence and certainty. However, in the discussion of Rule IV he stated that he was seeking a new science containing the "primary rudiments of human reason" and he hoped that such a science would enable him to secure the truth on every subject. He added that it is useless to devote oneself simply to "bare numbers and imaginary figures." As for his discussion of wax he was only proving that color and other secondary qualities do not belong to the "formal nature of body" but he was not concerned with exploring that formal nature.[15] Second, Descartes stated in Part VI of the *Discourse* the necessity of experimentation; and Lévy-Bruhl tells us that the last years of Descartes' life were spent chiefly in experimentation until his disastrous trip to Sweden. These two points indicate that he realized, as Romero does, that "looking within" for knowledge is not enough; that one must not neglect experience. In fact, in discussing Rule V, he objected to philosophers who neglect experience and imagine the birth of truth in them will imitate the method of Athena's birth.

The other basis for the view that Cartesian reason is immanent is, as we noted, that his view of substance is arrived at by means of the principle of identity. But is the principle of identity when regarded as the mere enunciation "A is A" back of what he said about the piece of wax? Did not Descartes discover that continuity persisted through change and consequently does not the discussion about the wax illustrate Hegel's true principle of identity rather than the principle of abstract identity? Furthermore, to say that "Every body is extended" is an analytical

[15] Cf. answer to third set of objections, also Principles 69 and 70.

statement and hence a statement of mere identity seems to be confusing the method of reaching that judgment with the judgment itself. To make such a judgment there must be analysis, but the judgment itself is synthetic. It has objective validity and not merely logical validity. Or, to put the matter as we find it in the Wallace translation of Hegel's *Logic*, the predicate is not found "somewhere in our head" but is an attribute belonging to the object.

In short, Cartesian reason recognized continuity and arrived at synthetic judgments. Furthermore the object of Descartes' search was the certain truth which he thought had eluded earlier seekers. This truth would be objective and universal. Again, as we have already noted, Cartesian reason recognized its limits and achieved transcendence in Romero's sense by opening itself to experience, by being submissive to the object which reason was seeking to understand. All this points to the conclusion that Romero is really a defender rather than an adversary of Cartesian reason. As such he has already made a real contribution to a genuine appreciation of reason, which is so much in need of a champion today.

Throughout the modern period—as indeed earlier too—some men's reason has impugned itself, the judge has also been the judged without, seemingly, a realization of this anomaly or the awareness that reason can not set limits to its power without already being beyond such limits, as Hegel saw. Because of the condemnation of reason by certain persons, those who have trusted it have adopted various procedures. For example, some thinkers have tried to keep reason close to the "footpaths of earth" in order to prevent reason from going beyond its obvious data. Because of so doing, reason's findings have been characterized as a smoking torch capable only briefly of illuminating the path into the future. These critics have made appeal to another capacity, variously named, in order to transcend the bounds they have set to reason's insights. Again, other thinkers who have trusted reason have attempted to lift its sights in order for it to fulfill its proper function. These thinkers have sought the wide view, they have sought to raise their thought above the embroilments of daily life in order to understand the world in which they live. Their critics have accused them of indulging in whimsical notions which indicate that reason is out of touch with the real. Their critics have implied that reason is unwilling to roll up its sleeves and go places in what sometimes are really eddies of "purposeless dust" rather than eddies which these critics regard as necessary accompaniments of facing facts. But there is not space here for the

true estimate of reason which Romero recognizes as needing to be made. We have had to limit ourselves to some statements about it. We can only hope that, with his keen insight, his sensitive understanding, and his scholarly attainments, Romero will undertake this task.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Christian Ethics. DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND. New York: David McKay Co. [1953]. x, 470 pp. $6.00.

Professor Hildebrand opens the book with an account of his method. He proposes to analyze the data of experience, and to accord them precedence over all theories and interpretations. The immediate facts of consciousness are to be examined at every turn, and accepted for what they are, even if they are in conflict, as in the case of human freedom and efficacious grace, and their reconciliation is "impossible on the level of our natural knowledge" (p. 18). Since the facts are to be the guide, the lives of the Christian saints, who represent the highest embodiment of moral value, will, it is claimed, illuminate the whole field of ethics. Yet ethics is to be distinguished from moral theology. Although the highest virtues, such as charity, could not be attained without a knowledge of Christian revelation, ethics does not assert these revealed truths nor appeal to them as arguments.

Prima facie, this distinction seems to be valid. The ethical writer could permissibly stick to the facts *as he sees them,* even if among these facts were experiences which appeared to imply theological doctrines, for he could suspend the claim that these doctrines are true. The Mohammedan or Hindu could do the same, thus preserving the community of ethical discussion. Perhaps this is one of the advantages of the phenomenological method. On the other hand, it is difficult to maintain that charity implies a knowledge of Christian revelation, i.e., a theological doctrine, and that charity is obviously a fact, and yet systematically refrain from asserting the valid conclusion. Perhaps what is really meant is that the occurrence of charity is *better understood* if Christian revelation is assumed to be true (p. 456). In any case, a more thorough phenomenology would be necessary. The sophisticated data of consciousness would have to be checked by careful genetic studies.

The author restricts the field of ethics to the "important," and distinguishes two kinds of importance, value and the "subjectively satisfying." Phenomenologically speaking, this distinction is a fact. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," for example, is experienced as something having value independent of the delight it affords on occasion. It is so experienced, we should add, by people trained or habituated to contrapuntal music. Unfortunately the author says almost nothing about the training or habituation required for the perception of specific values, and tends to attribute value dissent to "value blindness," to prejudice or pride. We can agree, however, that there is an intentional difference between a great achievement and a mere glass of water which quenches our thirst, and this experienced difference is qualitative, not one of degree. But is the author right in thinking that hedonism is thereby refuted? Hedonism plus learning theory and the phenomenon of projection might well account for the experienced difference.

"The central problem," the author says, "is the question whether the values are real properties of beings, properties which we find in beings even after we have abstracted from any possible motivation. . . . The moral nobility of an act of contrition, its importance in itself, is, if we contemplate such an act, univocally given to us . . . we need not approach it from a certain point of view; it suffices merely that our mind be unhampered by pride and concupiscence, that the eyes of our mind be not blinded by a perversion of the will" (p. 87).

The apprehension of the value of contrition is said to be like the perception that blood is red, or the recognition that 2 and 2 equal 4 (p. 125), except that, as we are sometimes reminded, painstaking analysis may be necessary. In criticizing the theory that good and evil are by-products of social organization, Professor Hildebrand states that "it is a typical example of an attempt to dissolve necessary, intelligible entities into contingent fictions and constructs. We might as well say that in reality a triangle is a square" (p. 118). Our own view is that such values are objective, *as experienced,* and may be so in fact, but that the experience alone, however imperious, does not prove that they are. Among the tests of "objectivity" are unanimity, compatibility with other qualities experienced as objective, and explanatory value in a comprehensive theory. It would seem that for Professor Hildebrand's purposes the third test is the best and most promising.

The author, in his careful manner, goes on to distinguish ontological value from qualitative value. The value of the will is contrasted with the value of a good will, the value of man, *qua* man, with the value of a generous man. Both of these values are

then counterposed to the value of being in general, which is perhaps too mystical to explain. The closest approach is that reality, whatever its qualities, is better than illusion; and that it is better to have truth even though it is all sad than to have falsity which is altogether delightful. But is not truth in this sense another transcendental, as difficult to understand as the one with which we started?

Moral values, or virtues, are a special case of qualitative values. They are distinguished, perhaps too sharply, by the author from other human qualities, such as efficiency, intelligence, and wit (p. 178), for courage without efficiency, loving kindness without intelligence, and humility without humor might not be regarded as virtues at all. In discussing value responses and cognitive acts the author also makes a number of distinctions, some of which seem too rigid. His view that "both cognitive acts and responses have an intentional character," and distinguish themselves by different intentionality, is important and sound, or at least a good working hypothesis, but why restrict intentionality to conscious processes? Intelligence and good will can become habitual.

The sharp division between intentional and teleological activities could also be challenged; likewise that between cognitive acts and affective responses. In cognitive acts, the author says, the whole content is on the object side, not in us, whereas in affective responses the content is in us, not in the object. But how can one be sure of this? Gestalt psychologists, clinical psychologists, and existentialists have been insisting that the affect is experienced out in the perceptual field.

The next step is to distinguish cognitive acts from theoretic responses. In a theoretic response (conviction, doubt, etc.), we are told, "the intention goes from us to the object. It is not the object that speaks, but we ourselves who speak. In these responses we do not acquire knowledge; rather, knowledge is presupposed" (p. 198). But is it presupposed in doubt? Similarly, cognitive acts are said to be free, but do we not speak of being compelled or constrained by facts and arguments? The answer to such objections is always a new distinction, but unfortunately the distinctions do not always become clearer as we proceed.

Although the author recognizes that in a broad sense "will" is involved in all responses, he restricts his interest to the narrow case of strictly volitional responses. Rightly insisting on the distinctive voluntary character of moral action, he is led to contrast "the will to be morally good" with the *natural* striving toward self-perfection or happiness. He also maintains, however, that

we are "ordered toward moral goodness." What this can mean except that God has endowed us with free will, with the power to choose good as well as evil, is difficult to see, and the reference to St. Augustine does nothing to clarify how we can be ordered toward moral goodness, yet free.

A companion difficulty arises in connection with the two "perfections of the will." The first perfection is the volitional act wherein the person comes to a decision with respect to an object—a decision which is "not determined by anything exterior to him, nor by his dispositions, his character, or any unfolding of his entelechy" (p. 284), whereas the second perfection is the power to move the body to enforce the decision. With regard to the first perfection, it is obvious that we *seem* to be able to act contrary to our dispositions and character, that the experience has this descriptive peculiarity. But what proof is there that this is actually the case? A serious and binding decision would be expected to require strength of character and a latent disposition to make the decision, as William James's account of conversion implies. It is true that the moment of decision may reverse strong tendencies, but will it reverse or free itself from them all? One wonders whether the experienced peculiarities of volition could not be explained, at least in part, *without* disabling our past self and its determinations. Wundt's theory of "creative synthesis" implies that decision results from the confluence of causal chains of events in events which have never been combined before. Hence, their causal effect could not be predicted, except statistically, and the sense of freedom from any, or even all, determinations might well be learned. But the author, as we have said, seems to be altogether right in maintaining that our freedom of will is not, *as experienced,* a link in a causal chain. It appears, as he says, to be "engendered by the free conscious center of the person" (p. 296). Any adequate psychological theory of the self and of self-consciousness would have to give a full explanation.

The author's discussion of "moral rigorism," which is reminiscent of Scheler's fine exposé of Pharisaism, is diligent and humane in the sense that it takes into account the circumstances of human action. That one should conform to the higher morally relevant value is self-evident, but this principle, the author says, "may be altered . . . by the theme of a situation, i.e., the task which this concrete situation entails" (p. 382). Circumstances can modify the application of a moral principle, he adds, without invalidating it. Thus to honor a debt might be obligatory at a given time, even though it interrupted an activity which, under facilitating circumstances, would carry the highest obligation. It

is this authority of circumstance which moral rigorism self-righteously neglects. The recognition by the author of a legitimate interest in the "subjectively satisfying" also tends to soften the severity of moral obligation by an acknowledgment of varying conditions of moral action.

The two sources of evil are said to be concupiscence and pride. Interpreted broadly, as a failure to acknowledge that there are things which are more important than oneself, pride is probably basic in any civilized code. What one misses in Professor Hildebrand's account is any attempt at psychogenic explanation, any sense of solidarity with the educators and clinicians who are daily engaged with crisis problems of frustration, aggression, and hostility. In so far as vicious behavior is left a mystery, remedial education and psychotherapy are hampered. Or is this really another subject altogether?

Professor Hildebrand points out, in concluding, that the title of the book should not be taken to imply that there are, in his opinion, "several ethics—a pagan, a Mohammedan, a Buddhist ethics—and that Christian ethics is one among others. . . . The entire analysis of ethical problems which we have offered points to the fact that in saying 'Christian' ethics, we mean the one, true, valid ethics" (p. 453). "Natural morality" is possible, however, without any knowledge of Christian revelation. The voice of conscience implies an absolute, but not the notion of a personal God. While maintaining the absolute truth of Christian ethics, Professor Hildebrand makes a valiant attempt to free his presentation from theological assumptions. His book, with its sharp discriminations of crux and nuance in moral life, should prove valuable to students of his and of other faiths as well, including those naturalists who find their main resource and hope, for ethical study, in the advance of the social sciences.

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A Study in Memory; a Philosophical Essay. E. J. FURLONG. London, New York, etc.: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd. [1951]. vii, 109 pp. 12 s. 6 d.

Memory, as this book makes clear, presents no fewer, and certainly no less difficult, epistemological problems than those arising from considerations of perception; yet, in proportion to the thought philosophers have expended on the latter, the former have been virtually neglected. Professor Furlong is mainly concerned with two such problems, that of the *justification* of memory and that of its correct *description*. Incidentally to this, some quite penetrat-

ing things are said about negative memories, pastness, and mental imagery.

The first problem, that of justification, is sharpened by a dialogue (Chapter 2), wherein both sceptic and anti-sceptic are shown to beg a good many questions—the sceptic, for instance, in urging on the basis of what he remembers that memory has often deceived and ought not therefore to be trusted, and the anti-sceptic in relying, e.g., on induction, knowledge of which itself presupposes correct recollection.

This apparent inevitableness of a *petitio principii* in any more elaborate justificatory attempt leads Professor Furlong to a close and interesting scrutiny of the theory, associated with G. F. Stout, to the effect that in memory one is simply "directly acquainted" with some past situation or event. This theory he rejects, in its various versions, for a number of reasons, the strongest argument against it being that, if one were by memory directly acquainted with a past situation, he should be able simply to read off its various features as he chose; whereas in fact one can never recall more than he originally noticed in a situation, and seldom as much. Suppose, for instance, I am asked how many pickets there were in the fence I saw yesterday. Now if my memory of the pickets is a present direct acquaintance with them, I should be able simply to count them. But in fact, as our author points out, one can never do this sort of thing with much more than guesswork, unless he has already counted them in the original perceptual experience and remembered what number he got.

It is in connection with this theory that Professor Furlong develops a penetrating discussion of negative memory situations, i.e., cases of correctly remembering what a thing was not, without remembering precisely what it was. Examples of this common occurrence would be remembering various colors that a thing was not, without being able to say what color it was; or, failing to remember someone's name, while remembering innumerable names that are wrong. The author's solutions to puzzles arising from this are based on a supposition, not defended at much length, that no memory is *purely* negative, and that we are able to recall what some situation was not, *only* because of the many things we can recall that it was—e.g., in the case of a forgotten name, that it was a short one, a common one, and so on.

Professor Furlong's own proposed justification for believing the testimony of memory is a simplification of R. F. Harrod's proposal, that the trustworthiness of memory be treated as an hypothesis, to be verified by predicting its consequences and then

seeing whether they in fact obtain. He insists, at the outset, that we do trust someone's memory, whether our own or another's, not blindly or unaccountably, but to the precise extent that we have in experience found it to be trustworthy—more in youth than in age, more one man's memory than another's, and so on. Thus, the argument goes, the "plain man" trusts, or distrusts, his memory on the same ground that he trusts or distrusts any witness whatever, viz., its past reliableness, or want of it. By analogy, we regard a newspaper reporter, say, as reliable to the extent that his reports have in the past been found to be correct; so likewise, if we have discovered that the information yielded by our memory has been quite uniformly correct, then our memory is, by virtue of that common-sense test, trustworthy.

Now this solution quite obviously begs the question—we must *remember* that the testimony of memory has been good—but this does not bother Professor Furlong much. He insists that, question-begging or not, this is precisely why men *do* trust memory, viz., that they remember it to have been trustworthy, and that any other ostensible "justification," however impeccable logically, would be weak indeed compared with this one.

There are several things in this that are likely to seem unconvincing to some readers. For one thing, it *is* quite plainly question-begging, and one is not entirely reassured by Professor Furlong's reminder that, in thus begging the question, he is but following the example set by plain men everywhere. Further, in leading up to this solution, the author repeatedly reminds us of the gravity of the problem, insisting that it must not be dismissed either as trivial, artificial, or insoluble. Yet we now discover that it *is* an artificial problem after all; that the view of the ordinary man, for all its circularity, is the best we can find; that although no real justification has thus been given, this ought not to bother philosophers, since it obviously never bothers anyone else. At this point the temptation is to say, with Reid, that a "justification" here is probably just futile, no *better* reason being available for believing what is remembered other than the plain fact that it is remembered.

Professor Furlong's concluding chapters describe the subjective features of remembering, and analyze the notion of pastness, one of the most convincing and significant claims here being that in memory, one "images or reproduces" his "whole state of mind on the remembered occasion," and not just such scattered sense data as happen to be associated with it.

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NOTES AND NEWS

The nineteenth series of Mahlon Powell Lectures is to be delivered by Professor John Wild of Harvard University, April 13th, 15th, and 16th, at Indiana University. Professor Wild's subject will be *The Challenge of Existentialism*. The announced titles for the three lectures are: "The Breakdown of Philosophy," "The Existentialist Challenge," and "A Realistic Answer."